



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building
1 Federal Drive
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FWS/NWRS/CP

JUN 28 2004

Dear Reviewer:

The attached Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan is a vital part of the future of the Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan is to guide Refuge management decisions over the next 15 years. We intend that the Plan provide a clear statement of the desired future condition of the Refuge. The Plan should provide a clear understanding of Refuge management actions to all who are interested in Squaw Creek NWR, and it should provide a sound basis for long-term operations, maintenance and capital improvement budget requests.

We invite you to review the Plan and tell us what you think. Your comments on the draft plan will help us write a final plan that is both visionary and practical.

Please address written comments to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Conservation Planning, Attn: Squaw Creek NWR CCP Comment, BHW Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Ft. Snelling, MN 55111. Comments can also be sent through the Service's Web site for the Squaw Creek NWR planning project: <http://midwest.fws.gov/planning/squawcreek/index.html>.

In order for the Planning Team to consider your comments when writing the final plan, we need to receive your comment by August 27, 2004. However, comments received after that date are welcome for consideration in future management decisions.

Again, thank you for your time, thoughts and interest in planning for Squaw Creek NWR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Larson".

Thomas J. Larson
Chief of Conservation Planning, Region 3

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Refuge Purpose	4
1.3 Refuge Vision for the Future	4
1.4 Purpose and Need for the Plan	5
1.5 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	6
1.5.1 The National Wildlife Refuge System	6
1.6 Existing Partnerships	7
1.7 Legal and Policy Guidance	8
Chapter 2: The Planning Process	9
2.1 Issues and Concerns	9
2.1.1 Wildlife Habitat and Resource Management	10
2.1.2 Land Management within the Watershed Impacts Refuge Water Quality and Quantity	10
2.1.3 Snow Goose Management	10
2.1.4 Refuge Expansion	10
2.1.5 Public Use	11
2.1.6 Public Service	11
Chapter 3: The Refuge Environment	12
3.1 Geographic/Ecosystem Setting	12
3.1.1 The Lower Missouri River Ecosystem	12
3.1.2 Migratory Bird Conservation Initiatives	15
3.1.2.1 Migratory Bird Conservation Initiatives	15
3.1.2.2 Region 3 Fish and Wildlife Resource Conservation Priorities	15
3.1.2.3 Biological Needs Assessment	16
3.1.2.4 Arctic Goose Management Initiative	17
3.1.3 Squaw Creek Wildlife Management District	17
3.1.4 Region 3 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Priorities	17
3.1.5 Other Conservation and Recreation Lands in the Area	18
3.2 Refuge Resources, Cultural Values and Uses	18
3.2.1 Climate	18
3.2.2 Geology and Soils	20
3.2.2.1 Water and Hydrology	20
3.2.3 Fish and Wildlife and Plant Resources	23
3.2.3.1 Vegetation	23
3.2.3.2 Birds	23
3.2.3.3 Mammals	24

3.2.3.4 Amphibians and Reptiles	24
3.2.3.5 Fish	25
3.2.3.6 Invertebrates	25
3.2.3.7 Plants	25
3.2.3.8 Threatened and Endangered Species	25
3.2.3.9 Cooperative Farming	26
3.2.3.10 Land Use	26
3.2.3.11 Threats to Resources	26
3.2.3.12 Administrative Facilities	27
3.2.4 Socioeconomic Setting	27
3.2.4.1 Population	29
3.2.4.2 Employment	29
3.2.4.3 Income and Education	29
3.2.5 Archeological and Cultural Values	29
3.2.6 Public Use	30
3.2.6.1 Potential Refuge Visitors	30
3.3 Current Management	31
3.3.1 Habitat Management	31
3.3.1.1 Wetland Management	31
3.3.1.2 Moist Soil Units	31
3.3.1.3 Grasslands	34
3.3.1.4 Forests	34
3.3.1.5 Cropland	34
3.3.2 Fish and Wildlife Monitoring	34
3.3.3 Public Use	36
3.3.4 Species Management	37
3.3.4.1 Animal Species	37
3.3.4.2 Plant Species	37
3.3.5 Archaeological and Cultural Resources	37
3.3.6 Special Management Areas	37
3.3.6.1 Farm Services Administration Conservation Easements	37
Chapter 4: Management Direction	39
4.1 Planned Refuge Programs	39
4.1.1 Introduction	39
4.1.2 Habitat	39
4.1.3 Fish and Wildlife	39
4.1.4 Wildlife-dependent Recreation, Environmental Education and Interpretation	40
4.1.5 Avoidance of Impacts to Listed Species	40
4.1.6 Climate Change Impacts	40
4.2 Goals, Objectives and Strategies	41
Chapter 5: Implementation and Monitoring	68
5.1 Personnel Needs	68
5.2 New and Existing Projects	70
5.3 Step-down Management Plans	70
5.4 Partnership Opportunities	70
5.5 Monitoring and Evaluation	71
5.6 Plan Amendment and Revision	71

Appendix A: Environmental Assessment	73
Appendix B: Glossary	139
Appendix C: Species Lists	145
Appendix D: Draft Compatibility Determinations	169
Appendix E: Compliance Requirements	185
Appendix F: Refuge Operations Needs (RONS) and Maintenance Management System (MMS)	191
Appendix G: Mailing List	197
Appendix H: List of Preparers	201
Appendix I: Wildlife Resource Conservation Priority Species for the Lower Missouri River Ecosystem	205
Appendix J: References	211
Appendix K: Comparison of Alternatives by Objective and Strategy	215

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Location of Squaw Creek NWR	2
Figure 2: Squaw Creek Wildlife Management Area	3
Figure 3: Squaw Creek NWR Relations to Watershed-based FWS-classified Ecosystems	13
Figure 4: Squaw Creek NWR Watershed and Surrounding Watershed	14
Figure 5: Bird Conservation Region	16
Figure 6: Other Conservation Areas in the Area of Squaw Creek NWR	19
Figure 7: Landforms of Missouri	21
Figure 8: Soils of Squaw Creek NWR	22
Figure 9: Squaw Creek NWR Administrative Facilities, 2003	28
Figure 10: Current Landcover (2003), Squaw Creek NWR	32
Figure 11: Wet Habitat Management, Squaw Creek NWR	33
Figure 12: Future Desired Land Cover, Squaw Creek NWR	42
Figure 13: Existing and Authorized Refuge Boundary	50
Figure 14: Eastern Massassauga Rattlesnake Landcover, Squaw Creek NWR	56
Figure 15: Squaw Creek NWR Staffing Chart, 2003-2018	69
Table 1: Step-down Management Plan Schedule	70

